



THE STOUFFER REPORT

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Governor's "Our Students First" Proposal Deserves Consideration

Just months after the Missouri General Assembly passed legislation increasing state funding for public schools, Gov. Blunt has introduced a new proposal designed to make further improvements to the quality of our children's education. The plan will require school districts to use 65 percent of their budgets for classrooms. Although I will need to examine the details of the legislation that will work to implement the plan, the governor's initiative keeps our state tightly focused on the education of our children.

Gov. Blunt's proposal requires at least 65 cents of every dollar spent in Missouri public schools to be used in the classroom for teachers and students. The idea is to prioritize in-class spending over administrative overhead.

In-class spending is defined as money going toward salaries and benefits for teachers and instructional aides; textbooks, computers and school supplies; arts, music and athletics; and field trips and after-school programs. These academic priorities are what further our children's education and enrich their lives. High administrative expenses sap school budgets to the detriment of student needs.

We are fortunate in the 21st District that many of our school districts are currently above the 65-percent threshold. Among our largest districts with in-class spending at 65 percent or more of their total budgets are: Carrollton, 65.09 percent; Fayette, 65.80 percent; Kearney, 65.12 percent; Lexington, 66.41 percent; Marshall, 72.14 percent; Odessa, 67.60 percent; and Salisbury, 67.09 percent. These schools show that while it is difficult to cut administrative costs, in-class expenditures must take precedence.

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We must not forget that out-of-class spending, which includes administrative offices and salaries, transportation, teacher training and food services, also are important for our students' educations.

Several of our top school districts direct less than 65 percent of their operating budgets to classroom expenses, including: Boonville, 62.68 percent; Excelsior Springs, 60.33 percent; and Macon R-I, 63.13 percent. These schools have maintained quality educational programs with in-class expenditures just short of the 65-percent margin.

However, it is important that we carefully examine proposals designed to increase the focus of our state's public schools on in-class needs. As a former school board president here in the 21st District, I am intrigued by all measures affecting the young people of Missouri. While I hesitate to support this proposal outright, without legislation available to illustrate the details of the plan, I encourage everyone in the 21st District to look closely at this measure and what it means for our students and our state.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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Below is a comprehensive listing of 21st District school districts' in-class spending.

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The following table lists in-class spending percentages for each school district in the 21st Senate District. Numbers are based on 2002-03 expenditure reports.

Bosworth R-V Schools	61.69%
Carrollton R-VII Schools	65.09
Hale R-I Schools	61.2
Norborne R-VIII Schools	60.34
Tina-Avalon R-II Schools	60.93
Brunswick R-II Schools	62.28
Keytesville R-III Schools	60.79
Northwestern R-I Schools	64.89
Salisbury R-IV Schools	67.09
Excelsior Springs 40 Schools	60.33
Kearney R-I Schools	65.12
Blackwater R-II Schools	69.35
Boonville R-I Schools	62.68
Cooper Co. R-IV Schools	58.19
Otterville R-VI Schools	58.04
Pilot Grove C-4 Schools	61.26
Prairie Home R-V Schools	60.38
Fayette R-III Schools	65.8
Howard Co. R-II Schools	62.1
New Franklin R-I Schools	57.58
Concordia R-II Schools	63.62
Lafayette Co. C-I Schools of Higginsville	61.97
Lexington R-V Schools	66.41
Odessa R-VII Schools	67.6
Santa Fe R-X Schools	63.15
Wellington-Napoleon R-IX Schools	66.15
Atlanta C-3 Schools	58.24
Bevier C-4 Schools	64.52
Callao C-8 Schools	59.72
La Plata R-II Schools	63.77
Macon Co. R-I Schools	63.13
Macon Co. R-IV Schools	62.43
Hardin-Central C-2 Schools	63.91
Lawson R-XIV Schools	65.89
Orrick R-XI Schools	64.36
Richmond R-XVI Schools	58.8
Stet R-XV Schools	56.9
Gilliam C-4 Schools	53.04
Hardeman R-X Schools	70.29
Malta Bend R-V Schools	60.81
Marshall Schools	72.14
Miami R-I Schools	58.36
Orearville R-IV Schools	68.32
Slater Schools	64.6
Sweet Springs R-VII Schools	66.99

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